# **Kaithi**

**Kaithi**, also called "Kayathi" or "Kayasthi", is a historical script used widely in parts of northern India, primarily in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. It was used for writing legal, administrative, and private records.<sup>[1]</sup>

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## **Etymology**

Kaithi script derives its name from the word Kayastha, a social group of India that traditionally consists of administrators and accountants.<sup>[2]</sup> The Kayastha community was closely associated with the princely courts and colonial governments of North India, and were employed by them to write and maintain records of revenue transactions, legal documents, and title deeds; general correspondence; and proceedings of the royal courts and related bodies.<sup>[3]</sup> The script used by them acquired the name Kaithi.

## History

Documents in Kaithi are traceable to at least the 16th century. The script was widely used during the Mughal period. In the 1880s, during the British Raj, the script was recognised as the official script of the law courts of Bihar. Kaithi was the most widely used script of North India west of Bengal. In 1854, 77,368 school primers were in Kaithi script, as compared to 25,151 in Devanagari and 24,302 in Mahajani. [4] Among the three scripts widely used in the 'Hindi Belt', Kaithi was widely perceived to be neutral, as it was used

	Kaithī								
Kayath	i, Kayasthi , कैथी								
	AS COMMONLY WRITTEN, g suspended from a continuous top-line.								
an w	다 기 된 다· 속동   30 ml 지어 중 거 식상 함								
Туре	Abugida								
Languages Angika, Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Hindustani, Magahi, Maithili, Nagpuri									
Time period	c. 16th–mid 20th century								
Parent systems	Brahmi								
	<ul><li>Gupta</li></ul>								
	<ul><li>Nāgarī</li></ul>								
	<ul><li>Kaithī</li></ul>								
Sister systems	Devanagari, Nandinagari, Sylheti Nagari, Gujarati								
Direction	Left-to-right								
ISO 15924	Kthi, 317								
Unicode alias	Kaithi								
Unicode range	U+11080-U+110CF (https://www.unicode. org/charts/PDF/U1108 0.pdf)								

by both Hindus and Muslims alike for day-to-day correspondence, financial, and administrative activities, while Devanagari was used by Hindus and Persian script by Muslims for religious literature and education. This made Kaithi increasingly unfavorable to the more conservative and religiously inclined members of society who insisted on Devanagari-based and Persian-based transcription of Hindi dialects. As a result of their influence and due to the wide availability of Devanagari type as opposed to the incredibly large variability of Kaithi, Devanagari was promoted, particularly in the Northwest Provinces, which covers present-day Uttar Pradesh. Kaithi was also nicknamed "Shikasta Nagari" by analogy with Shikasta Nastaliq, because the relationship of Kaithi to Devanagari was perceived as akin to the relationship between the widely used dot-less Shikasta Nastaliq of the time and the more formal printed Nastaliq scripts, which used dotted letters and fuller, less abbreviated letter forms.

### **Consonants**

All Kaithi consonants have an inherent *a* vowel:



Bhojpuri (kaithi) signboard at Purbi Gumti Arrah along with Persian Script (on right side) and Roman Script (above). "Lock no. 11" is written on the board in various languages or scripts.



A printed form of the Kaithi script, as of the mid-19th century

#### Occlusives

		VOICE	LESS PL	OSIVES			VOIC							
	Unaspirated			Aspi	rated	Unaspirated			Aspi	rated	NASALS			
	Letter	Trans.	IPA	Letter	Trans.	Letter	Trans.	IPA	Letter	Trans.	Letter	Trans.	IPA	
Velar	ൻ	k	/k/	щ	kh	اد	g	/g/	ઘ	gh	ß	'n	/ŋ/	
Palatal	ય	С	/c/	છ	ch	Ŋ	j	/ <del>j</del> /	ع	jh	거	ñ	/ɲ/	
Datasflass	۷	ţ	/t/	ઠ	ţh	5	ģ	/d/	ઢ	фh	Н	ù	/n/	
Retroflex						Ş	ŗ	/ʈ/	Ģ	ŗh				
Dental	1	t	/t/	થ	th	3	d	/d/	ય	dh	<b>ৰ</b>	n	/n/	
Labial	Ч	р	/p/	શ્	ph	q	b	/b/	व	bh	ধ	m	/m/	

#### Sonorants and fricatives

		Palatal		F	Retroflex			Dental		Labial			
	Letter Trans.		IPA	Letter Trans.		IPA	Letter Trans.		IPA	Letter Trans		IPA	
Sonorants	갞	у	/j/	1	r	/r/	9	I	/١/	Ġ	v	/u/	
Sibilants	શ	Ś	/¢/	Ч	ş	/ş/	સ	S	/s/				
		Other											

h

હ

/h/

## **Vowels**

Kaithi vowels have independent (initial) and dependent (diacritic) forms:

#### Vowels

	Trans.	Letter	Diacritic	Shown with k	Trans.	Letter	Diacritic	Shown with k
Guttural	a	묏		ቀ	ā	웨		ক।
Palatal	i	ફ		िक	ī	ξ	<b>J</b>	ની
Rounded	u	3	v	পু	ū	31	6	পু
Palatoguttural	е	Ų	_	के	ai	ý	7	कै
Labioguttural	0	श्रो	Ì	को	au	श्रौ	1	की

# **Diacritics**

Several diacritics are employed to change the meaning of letters:

Diacritic	Name	Function
٠	candrabindu	A candrabindu denotes nasalisation although it is not normally used with Kaithi. <sup>[3]</sup>
•	anusvara	An anusvara in Kaithi represents true vowel nasalisation. [3] For example, $\dot{\Phi}$ , $kam$ .
:	visarga	Visarga is a Sanskrit holdover originally representing /h/. For example, <b>中</b> : kaḥ. <sup>[3]</sup>
	virama	A virama removes a consonant's inherent $a$ and in some cases forms consonant clusters. Compare MQ maba with MQ mba. [6]
	nuqta	A nuqta is used to extend letters to represent non-native sounds. For example, $\mathbf{M}$ $\mathbf{j}a$ + nuqta = $\mathbf{M}$ , which represents Arabic zayin. [3]

# **Punctuation**

Kaithi has several script-specific punctuation marks:

Sign	Description
0	The abbreviation sign is one method of representing abbreviations in Kaithi. For example, $\Theta$ abbreviated as $\Theta$ $\circ$ $\mathbb{S}^{[3]}$
<i>د</i> ل	The <i>number sign</i> is used with digits for enumerated lists and numerical sequences. <sup>[3]</sup> It can appear above, below, or before a digit or sequence of digits. <sup>[3]</sup> For example, 6-93.
<b>د</b>	The <i>enumeration sign</i> is a spacing version of the <i>number sign</i> . <sup>[6]</sup> It always appears before a digit or sequence of digits (never above or below).
_	The section sign indicates the end of a sentence. <sup>[6]</sup>
=	The double section sign indicates the end of a larger section of text, such as a paragraph. <sup>[6]</sup>
I	Danda is a Kaithi-specific danda.
II	Double danda is a Kaithi-specific double danda.

General punctuation is also used with Kaithi:

- + plus sign can be used to mark phrase boundaries
- - hyphen and hyphen-minus can be used for hyphenation
- 'word separator middle dot can be used as a word boundary (as can a hyphen)

## **Digits**

Kaithi uses stylistic variants of Devangari digits. It also uses common Indic number signs for fractions and unit marks.<sup>[6]</sup>

## Unicode

Kaithi script was added to the Unicode Standard in October 2009 with the release of version 5.2.

The Unicode block for Kaithi is U+11080–U+110CF:

	<b>Kaithi</b> <sup>[1][2]</sup> Official Unicode Consortium code chart (https://www.unicode.org/charts/PDF/U11080.pdf) (PDF)															
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Α	В	С	D	E	F
U+1108x	٠	•	:	욌	욌	ફ	ξ	3	31	у	ý	श्रो	श्रौ	ф	щ	ગ
U+1109x	ध	ß	ય	છ	Ŋ	3	거	۷	ઠ	5	Ş	ઢ	Ģ	Н	٦	થ
U+110Ax	3	ય	<b>এ</b>	Ч	શુ	q	ষ	ধ	ય	1	θ	Ġ	श	Ч	સ	6
U+110Bx	I		٦	v	٠	_	1	ì	1		•	o	مـ	هر	_	=
U+110Cx	I	II														

#### Notes

- 1.^ As of Unicode version 12.0
- 2.^ Grey areas indicate non-assigned code points

### See also

- Devanagari
- Sylheti Nagari
- Gujarati script

### References

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- 4. Rai, Alok. "Hindi Nationalism", p. 13
- 5. General Report on Public Instruction in the Bengal Presidency, p. 103.
- 6. "The Unicode Standard, Chapter 15.2: Kaithi" (https://www.unicode.org/versions/Unicode12.0.0/ch15.pdf#G69704) (PDF). Unicode Consortium. March 2019.

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